



*strengthening our faith*

*by rebuilding our heritage*

September 2023

My dear parishioners,

As I begin this letter on a gorgeous Labor Day, the sun is pouring in my windows. Even though temperatures are climbing today, I see the end of summer and the beginning of a new parish season. This evening I join the priests of the Archdiocese for our annual Labor Day Picnic, and tomorrow my staff and I begin this new season.

## **A New Reality**

Last year at this time we were hoping to welcome many more of you back to Mass and our many in-person activities. Reality however, has not brought about a sizeable change. **Attendance at Mass stands at approximately 70% of pre-pandemic levels.** Many parishioners who work at home now ask, “Do I really want to cross the river for Mass at St. Matthew’s?” Others simply have gotten out of the habit!

Some have gotten comfortable with livestreamed liturgies that, while enriching, do not replace participation in celebrating the Body of Christ. We need to renew our commitment to **being Church—actively, as a community of faith, nourished by Word AND Sacrament. Receiving the Body of Christ AND being an active part of the Body of Christ—BOTH are necessary.**

We are a **sacramental community**. We ARE members of the Body of Christ who come together to receive the Bread of Life, Jesus. **We need Jesus in his body and blood** and we need him in our brothers and sisters physically present around us. Working from home may make it seem harder to get up on Sundays, dress for Mass, drive into the city, or even walk the blocks to enter the Cathedral. Difficult, perhaps, but the reward is life-giving!

## **Time to Return for a Bilingual Feast of St. Matthew**

Our “**Amen**” at Communion affirms not only our faith in the presence of Jesus in the host, but also the reality that we are the Body of Christ, joined with our Lord and brother, Jesus, and with one another. Together we are sent forth from the Mass to bear his presence to others, wherever we go. Unless restricted by health or other concerns, **we must ask ourselves whether it is time to return and celebrate with our community.**

A good time to start, if you have not already, will be this **Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup>**, when we celebrate as one parish community the **Feast of St. Matthew at the 11am bilingual Mass**, with Cardinal Gregory presiding. The celebration will not be complete without your presence.

## **Parish Council Update**

This past year I began working with a **new Parish Pastoral Council**. (To see members’ photos and bios, visit [stmatthewscathedral.org/PC](http://stmatthewscathedral.org/PC).) L.J. Milone, our Faith Formation Director, serves as the Council’s Executive Secretary. I have been very pleased with the Council’s work. We have discussed results of our 2022 parish listening sessions, including the importance of hospitality for the parish, and ways to invite

parishioners back to Mass. This year we will take up more topics from the listening sessions – increasing hospitality, fostering a welcoming atmosphere, and looking at our ministries (positives and challenges), and asking the question: ‘where do we go from here?’

## Call for Liturgical Ministers

For a variety of reasons, many of our liturgical ministers have not returned since the pandemic began. **Lectors, Eucharistic ministers, altar servers, and ushers/ministers of hospitality are drastically needed for weekend and weekday Masses.**

The most important parish gathering is the Sunday Eucharist. We are fed with the Eucharist so that we can go forth and bring the love of Jesus to our families, coworkers, community, and the most vulnerable among us. **We need parishioners who can assist those participating** in the liturgy to have a truly “heavenly” experience.

**Ministers of hospitality are needed** to welcome and orient visitors, assist with seating, distribute programs and bulletins, and collect the offerings.

**The Lector** proclaiming the Word forms a real team with the homilist. As the priest or deacon preaches on a particular reading, he assumes that it has been proclaimed so as to be HEARD and clearly UNDERSTOOD. **We need committed lectors.**

**Extraordinary Ministers of Communion** assist in bringing the Eucharist to those present. What a great privilege: to bring the Body and Blood of Jesus to our brothers and sisters. In order to give everyone the opportunity to receive from the cup, **we need more Communion ministers.**

**Servers** assist with the many ceremonial elements of the Mass. Processions take place with cross and candles, books are held to assist presiders, candles are lit, items must be placed on the altar. **Servers are urgently needed** to perform small but necessary tasks for each liturgy.

We need YOUR help. Consider perhaps assisting the parish community once a week, twice a month, or even just once a month or occasionally. We will work out a schedule based on your preferences and time constraints. Interested? **We need YOU!!** Contact Carmen Westbrook at [carmen.westbrook@gmail.com](mailto:carmen.westbrook@gmail.com) to volunteer. You also may email or call me ([rjameson@stmatthewscathedral.org](mailto:rjameson@stmatthewscathedral.org), 202-347-9089). We—the Church, this parish community—need you.

**Thank you so much** for all you do for the parish. I am so grateful. I look forward to an exciting and challenging year. God bless.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Rev. Msgr. W. Ronald Jameson  
Rector